

We often refer to Jesus as the Master Teacher, and the scriptural record of His earthly ministry gives evidence that He was a master at teaching people by involving them in His message.

Hearing. Retention through hearing only is one of the lower levels of learning, yet Jesus used the method of lecture on many occasions to communicate truth to the disciples and the multitudes. But even Jesus' "lectures" were presented in such a way that those who listened were drawn into His message. When Jesus talked to people, He couched His message in terms and concepts which were familiar to them. "A farmer went out to sow his seed," Jesus stated as He began to tell a crowd about the importance of receptive hearts (Matt. 13:3). In an agricultural community, a lesson on a receptive heart was easily understood in terms of soil and seeds.

"The kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish," Jesus said (Matt 13:47). Fishing was important in the culture during Jesus' ministry, and a parable using fish and nets makes the verbal message come alive for the listeners. Jesus was a model lecturer in taking people from the known to the unknown through the use of parables and familiar illustrations.

Seeing. Jesus knew the importance of learning through the "eye" as well as the "ear" as evidenced by His use of visual aids in teaching. Though He did teach in the Temple, His most notable homilies took place outdoors where He could point to visual illustrations of the truth He was presenting. From the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5—7 we find such statements as, "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden" (Matt. 5:14). "Look at the birds of the air" (Matt. 6:26). "A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit" (Matt. 7:18). "See how the lilies of the field grow," (Matt. 6:28). In each case Jesus could point to a visible illustration on the hillside to tie His verbal presentation to a concrete image for the mind to grasp.

Whenever it was appropriate Jesus used a visual point of reference such as coins, fish, grain, sheep and shepherds to increase the retention of His listeners. He was a master at helping people see the Word of God as well as hear it.

Doing. The greatest retention in learning comes from the level of what we SAY (70 percent) and what we SAY and DO (90 percent). Jesus employed these principles also by actively involving His disciples in the ministry with Him. He believed that His men would learn by doing, and so He involved them in ministry at a practical level.

"He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to cure every kind of disease and the sickness... These twelve Jesus sent out" (Matt. 10:1,5). During the feeding of the five thousand He said to His disciples, "You give them something to eat" (Luke 9:13). Jesus gave His followers many opportunities to be involved in His message, and thus realize the maximum potential for the learning experience.